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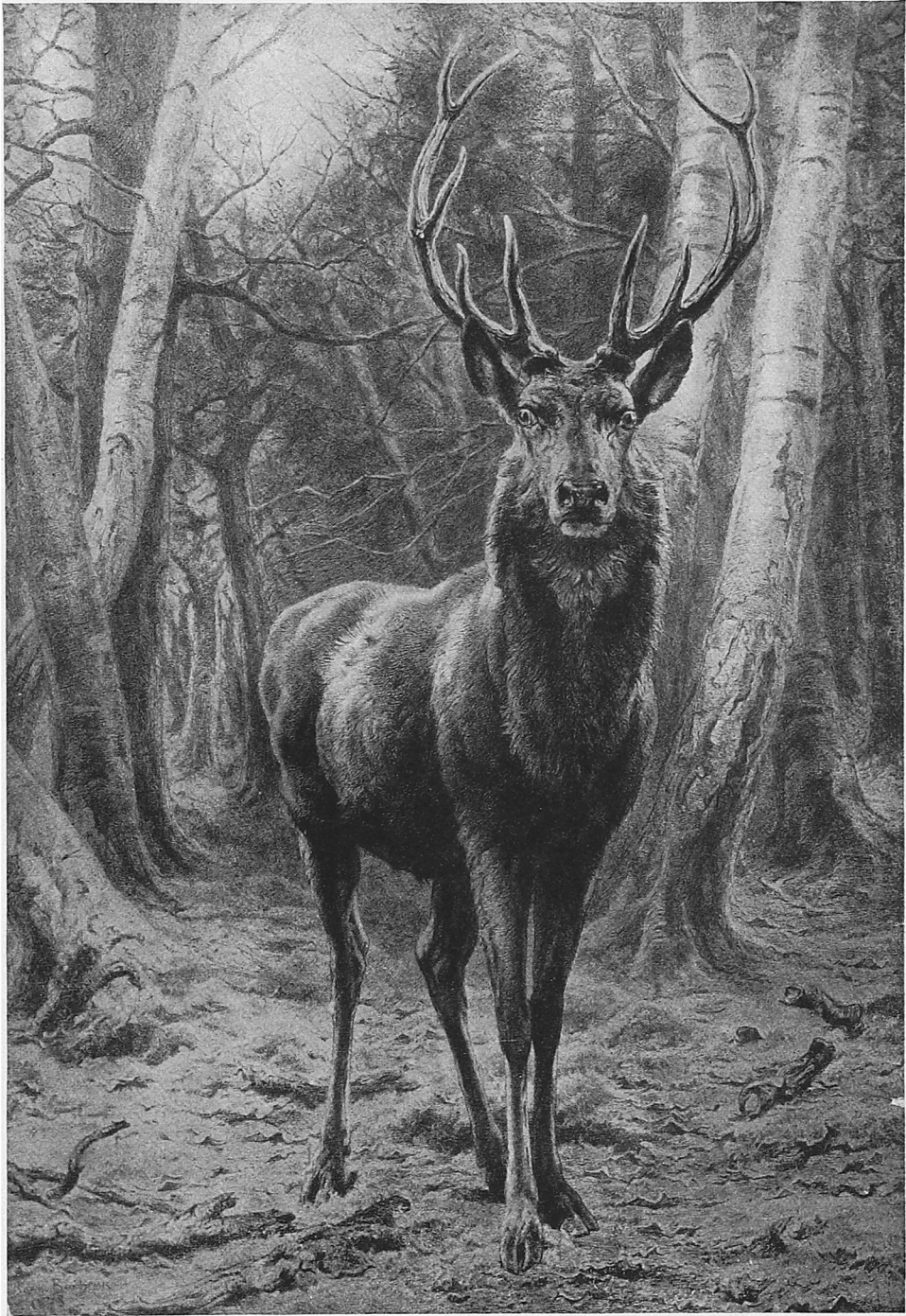
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KING OF THE FOREST
BY ROSA BONHEUR



ALLEGORY OF SPRING
By BOTTICELLI

Each group or figure sufficient unto itself. Separate ideas.

General Principle of Art and Design

By FLORENCE M. BIGELOW

IT is not by *chance* that excellencies are produced but by rules which men of genius have discovered by their own peculiar observation or have felt intuitively to be of a texture difficult to express in words. If a production is not necessarily good even though it complies with the laws of composition, it is surely *false* if it contradicts them. Without some acquaintance with composition principles, visual sensitiveness is impossible, as is also a cultivated power of selection. Might we hope that with more enlightenment on the subject, the hackneyed expression "I am no artist but I know what I like" would be supplemented by "and I know why I like it."

Personal likes and dislikes form no criterion on which to base judgment but a sane power of criticism, based on individual feel-

ing, subject to well defined rules and laws, is within the reach of all, for *Art* principles are *Life* principles. The beautiful way of doing *anything* is art and the qualities which go to the making of what we have been in the habit of regarding exclusively as a work of art are analogous to those which make for efficiency *in life*, namely, *order* or definite plan, *harmony*, having something in common, balance or repose, *rhythm*, joint action or movement, and unity, necessary in *any* complex system. To reverse the statement the life of the individual will be complete in its efficiency and happiness only when regulated by principles of artistic ethics.

To be capable of just criticism and keenest pleasure one must know *more* about a picture than that it is an old *master* if the



VENUS DE MILO

Illustrating poise and line.

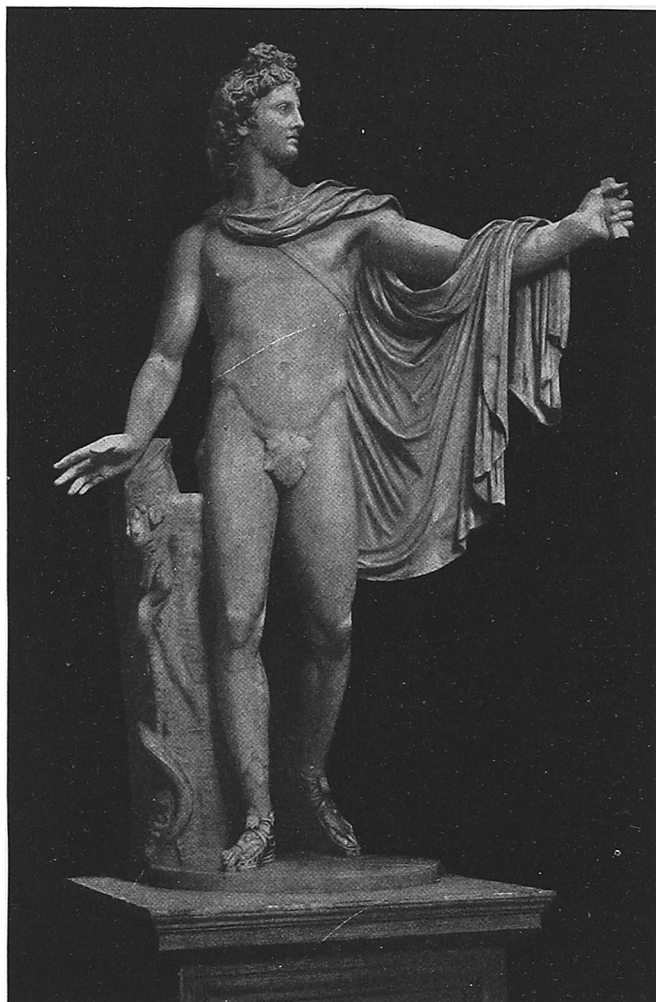
sky is gray and the grass black, the work of an amateur if the sky be painted blue and the grass green, from the brush of a *realist*, if the sky is green and the grass blue, from a *colorist* if the sky be yellow and the grass purple or that when the artist paints his sky octagonal and his grass rectangular he is a *cubist*, and a futurist, and genius in *both* are *problematic*.

Art is a tradition passed on from one individual to another, the personal elements and unessentials gradually being eliminated until *certain* spaces and qualities have been found harmonious and grateful and others

not. So our consideration will be of principles time tested, searched for in the works which the world will *not* let *die*, the search being augmented by the exclusion of such as have had their day and passed. They will not be found in complicated riddles of *theory* which require the *connoisseurship* of *experts* and are not from the whole people nor their expression and epitome. They will not be found in these new movements which seem to refute all established principles, expressing as they do the *objectivity* of a *subjectivity*, not in the *violent* and *brusque*, the *occult* and *curious* which will promptly van-

APOLLO OF THE
BELVEDERE

*Illustrating strength
and beauty of line.*



ish, or there is to *be* no art, as the world has understood the word. Mr. Kipling of course goes right to the heart of things:

A *fool* there was and he drew a stair,
Even as you and I!
And he painted a *nude* descending there;
We called it a Hurricane on a Tear!
But the *fool*, he called it a lady square;
Even as you and I!

Oh, the *time* we waste and the *paint* we waste,
And the *terrible* things we scrawl;
Depicting the lady who isn't there
(And now we know that she isn't there)
And never *was* there at all!

Certain it is that these movements, if not

wholly abberationary, will leave to the world nothing of value until modified to in *some* way conform to art principles more or *less traditional*. Time has not yet simplified *their* message and the *great Message* has *always* been the simple one.

It has been the history of *all revolution-ary* movements that they have met opposition at first but it does not follow that all movements which are opposed prove of value eventually.

A genius is happy in his own *interpretation* of the traditions to which *his* expressed character gives a certain vitality, *his* strong characteristics and feelings about art *force*



GIRL AT THE PIANO
By JACQUES VILLON

*Representing lack of order
and confused composition.*

themselves into and *permeate* his work. Thus he feels it no crime to *imitate* so long as he pays interest. Shakespeare frankly adopted a plot and infused into it a new and *greater* spirit and Gounod and Beethoven *both* used themes of *Bach*.

Not overlooking, then, this great element of personality and realizing that the latest word has never been said in art and nature we will study first the principles which should control all branches of art work, paintings, sculpture, architecture, *decoration*, and *later*, those which apply more especially to decoration. For it must be conceded that although principles of design form the ground-work for composition of every nature there are *subtle* elements, mood expressing, thought projecting elements in painting, sculpture and music

which do not figure largely in decorative work, and further, that decoration has its own restrictions imposed by kind of material, by the ultimate purpose of the object and by processes of manufacture. The Arts then are governed as are life and nature by the great law of *order*.

Harmony, balance and rhythm are important modes in which order is revealed in nature and through design in works of art. Music, dramatic expression, literature, dancing, architecture, plastic art, poetry and sculpture in their various forms are based on harmony, balance and rhythm and are good or *poor* according as they *meet* the conditions imposed by *these* laws.

Denman Ross says, "Let us aim at order and hope for beauty. * * * While I am unable to give any *definition* of beauty I

know where I am *sure to find* it. The beautiful is revealed in instances of *order*, in instances of harmony, balance and rhythm. We shall find it in what may be called supreme instances."

A "go as you please" method, misnamed originality, usually ends, as did the mid-nineteenth century decline of tradition, in the production of mere novelties. Individuality can *never* be an excuse for faulty drawing, proportion or composition, for originality may find all the latitude it requires within the limits of *art principles* and the bizarre and simply different are not to be mistaken for the personal.

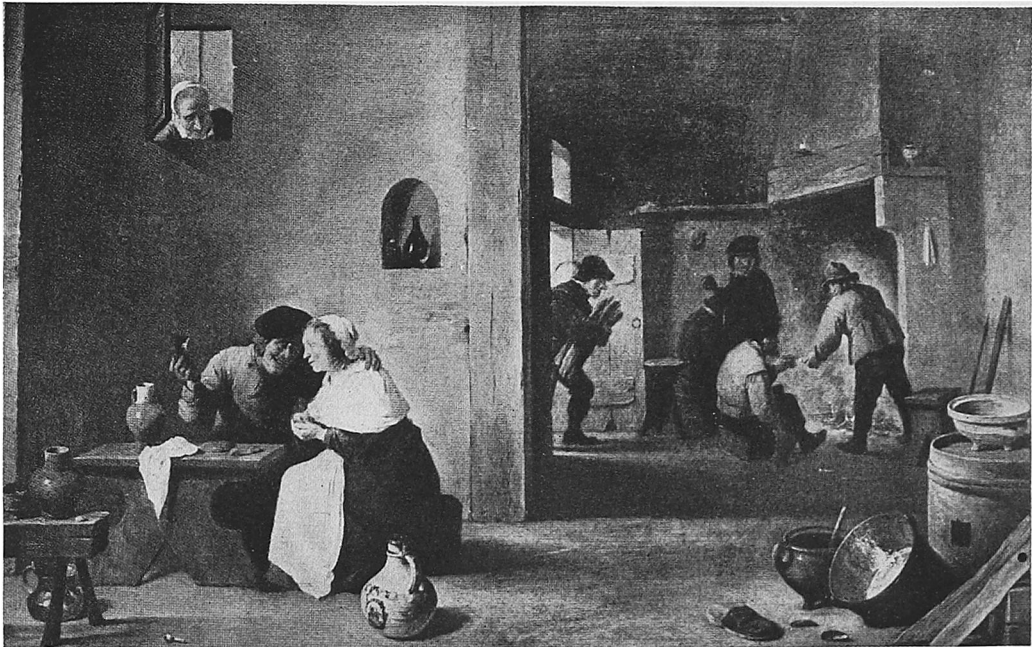
Without reference to its story telling qualities a painting should be a design of orderly arranged spaces. It must have a definite plan of leading lines and disposition of lights and darks.

There are so many plans of composition cited as principles of composition that it would be only confusing to note them all. To me the big principle is that there be a plan, an orderly plan selected as best

adapted to fill the program, as most suitable to express the thought without incongruities, unity between the idea and the form of expression being the refinement of composition.

Lack of order in architecture has produced many strange jumbles of features from many periods, a mixture of Greek, Egyptian, Oriental or Colonial elements to a distressing degree. A selection of an appropriate style and consistency to a period would bring about the desired order.

A room furnished and decorated with things inherited, with gifts displayed for the sake of sentiment, with *furniture additions* made from time to time, with careless indifference as to the harmony of the whole, becomes more and more of a *museum* and is in danger of giving an impression of disorder which no intrinsic value which the individual objects may possess is able to overcome. Add to these points, rugs laid at varying angles out of harmony with the construction lines of the room, curtains looped up disregarding the dominant verti-



INTERIOR OF AN INN
By TENIERS

Showing lack of unity. Two complete pictures with no unifying elements.



WHISTLER'S MOTHER
By WHISTLER

*An example of exquisite
harmony in composition.*

cal lines of the casements and books on the bias across each corner of the table and no amount of exquisite neatness will overcome the effect of unrest produced upon the observer. We may feel proud that America is leading the world in the tendency toward beautiful interiors. An artistic room, a great painting, a creditable piece of sculpture or a satisfactory building must have its inception in as definite and orderly a design plan as must a city beautiful; for the lack of order is to art what discord would be to music, or a collection of incoherent facts or unrelated incidents to literature. Order is the perfect equipoise of elements.

We have spoken of harmony as one of the modes of producing order. In sights, sounds, ideas, or any sense impressions some correspondence or likeness, some recurrence of like things will produce harmony and the *more* things there are in common the greater will be the harmony. *Tone* harmony occurs when tones sharing *some common quality* are used. Any number of colors harmonize when each contains some of one of them. It is safe to conclude that any spot of tone which flashes its importance on one's attention on entering a room or coming upon a person is out of harmony, has nothing in common with its sur-

roundings whether it be the pure white tidy, the only white spot in the room or the yellow shoes with the black costume.

All colors harmonize out of doors, at a distance, because of the tone of the atmosphere which envelops everything. It may be a veil of mist or smoke, sunset hues or sunlight which touches each thing with a common element. Harmony of color in painting and decorations creates an atmosphere or mood according to the *quality* of the color, which is common to all the colors used in the composition. Thus is brought about an effect of sadness, cheerfulness or repulsion.

Measure harmony means the uses of *measures* having a common unit of division. This dominant measure may be apparent to the *casual observer* as in the popular Greek fret border whose beauty is dependent upon the recurrence of a unit of measure, or it

may be so hidden within some beautiful form that the dominant measure is felt only by the student. So in Giotto's tower, the beauty of which is due to the recurrence of a cube the unit of measure. Six of these are placed one above the other the monotony of repetition which would otherwise have resulted being varied by increase of interest toward the top. In *shape* harmony we have lines and areas expressing some common characteristic as curved lines with curve-linear forms when similarity of shape is *impossible* the placing of these shapes in such a relation that the accord will be more apparent than the opposition, will result in harmony.

It must be realized that every item of a composition has a certain pulling force. Each its attraction for the eye thus establishing proportional *detraction* for every other part. The eye naturally travels or



BODY OF SAINT CECILIA CARRIED INTO THE CATACOMBS
By BOUGEREAU

Example of gradation—dark to light
—brightest light at point of interest.



DANCE OF THE NYMPHS
By COROT

Representing rhythm in painting

shifts from the center of interest, which may be to one side of the center of balance, to the other, and if there is something there to receive it the balance is grateful.

As a rule the center of the canvas forms the center of the picture and the farther from the center and more isolated an object is the greater its weight or attraction, or in other words, very important objects at a short distance from the center are balanced by small ones farther away. The whole of the pictorial interest may be on one side of the center and the balance brought about by the quality of the space on the other side, some attractive technique or feeling of depth. If then the eye moves from one part of the composition to the other without the feeling of undue weight at any one part it finds repose and delight in the equipoise.

Rhythm, a recurrence of a sequence of units in a definite and harmonious arrangement, is repetition with variety. It produces the feeling of movement or progression, the repetition of unit and space, unit and space, two units and space and so on through all the varied possibilities being analogous to the marching time of music or scansion of verse. Measure rhythm of equal attractions at equal distances brings about the monotony distasteful to the human mind, but measure *rhythm*, the interrelation of details in an increasing ratio from small to large, or the reverse, suggests movement and joint action which makes for unity. Drop a stone into the water and as the waves grow larger and larger you have measure rhythm a movement by means of interrelated measures. This quality in design is what crescendo and diminuendo are to music. It is

what gives interest to objects seen in perspective. Tone rhythm, gradation from dark to light or vice versa leads the eye toward the point of greatest contrast and if correctly used is a great factor in attracting attention to the point of interest of the composition. *Shape* rhythm suggests movement in the form itself without thought of repetition. It is opposed to the *static*, it reaches outward as in an elm tree or opening flower.

A work of art should not contain details understood only by the initiated, but should be readable and readily grasped at first glance. This strong impression can be given by adherence to the composition principle of principality and sacrifices, which simply means the focalizing of the interest in one

point called the climax, and reducing all other focal points to a minimum. The climax should hold the important position, should be where the eye can readily find it, not too near the edge of the composition. In a *painting* different elements balancing so that the average of interest falls near the middle of the frame, while in other visual arts, as sculpture and architecture, the balancing is relative to the center of gravity.

When a composition is to be appreciated in sequence as in a series of pictures or in the drama, the climax is at the end, but in either case the subclimaxes, the minor elements, the accompaniments or secondary motives should conform absolutely to the characteristics evinced by the climax, must reach in a fainter way the main motive. The



ADORATION OF THE MAGI
By BOTTICELLI

Example illustrating lack of concentration
on most interesting part of the picture.
Background not sufficiently subordinated.



SERENITY
BY HOMER MARTIN

Figures outside natural line of the picture's composition. Eye leads out of the picture instead of into it.

strong lines of these elements should lead the eye *toward* the focal point instead of away from it and should there be color differences, the most striking should be for the climax, and the strongest *contrasts* of tone used at this point. When the point of interest is once established, it becomes the controlling force, asserts itself. Most Japanese Art emphasizes this plan in a striking degree. A principal mass holding the attention, one or two subordinate masses and the rest plain spaces. Unless one part is kept subservient to another emphasizing the principal motive, also enriching it by contrast as in the accompaniment to a song there is spottiness and unrest caused by the eye traveling rapidly from one point to another back and forth with no resting place. Architecture, story, musical composition, alike recognize the primary importance of constructive elements, minor thoughts and expressions forming a contrast to the leading interest and subservient to the leading structural idea; *not* overpowering it. In ornament this idea of principality and sacrifice is not important only insofar as it relieves monotony, to which the human race as a whole is antagonistic. Although the first methods by which things were turned into ornament was repetition, if carried too far it produces monotony. So the contrasting of *plain* with *decorated spaces* imparts vigor and forms resting places as refreshing as the oases in the desert or silence after a din of noise or continued chatter. In this matter we have the best Greek ornamentation surpassing the Roman. The small quantities of its exquisite ornament surrounded by plain masses, which make them doubly precious, whereas the Roman is covered, monotonous, dull, confused.

A painter takes into account the intrinsic interest of his scene, its fidelity to nature, *importance* in history and thought, in addition to the work of pure design, arrangement of forms and choice of colors—the decorative artist considers, however, the arrangement of form and color regardless of

what they represent, except to avoid incongruities where *symbolism* of form or color exists.

Appreciation of beauty in application means to a great extent a knowledge of the *fitness* of things, since beauty in conjunction with appropriateness is essential to good ornament.

Fitness to purpose then is the principle to be used as a basis of judgment of the *artistic worth* of things about us both of use and ornament. The world is full of ugly things made to sell but everything genuine or fit to preserve conforms to a direct scheme of use and beauty.

The purpose—the object is to serve must be considered, the position it is to occupy, the material in which it is expressed and to which applied and the means wherewith it is to be executed. It must answer its purpose completely and permanently.

The arts in flat as wall surfaces, mosaics, inlay, stained glass, book decoration, monumental brasses, textiles, wall paper, as well as those in the round; architecture, sculpture, bronzes, furniture, jewelry, and metal work, impose their own special conditions on designers and workers, due to material and method, which limitations must be frankly accepted without any attempt to conceal or minimize, but turned into an effective element in the design. Tools and processes mark their character on work done, making a style peculiar to each kind of work. These limitations have always been observed when art was at its height and violated as art declined which is especially noticeable in the incongruities of the break up of the Renaissance in the late 16th century.

Beauty of proportion and refinement of form are essentially the accessory *to* and *not* the substitute *for* the useful. If *material* is to determine the character of the work a church window must be part and parcel of the architecture of the church and not a hole in the wall through which a picture may be seen. A design appropriate for

wrought iron would be of unlike quality with one suitable for pottery. The enrichment of a sword hilt must not hurt nor render difficult or impossible the proper wielding of the sword. This idea, that decoration should in no way interfere with use, will apply to *all* articles of use including wearing apparel.

An art dependent upon other arts as decoration is upon building and architecture is bound to follow the principles which govern *them* and the work will be based to a great extent on what is already done, selections being made from the appropriate period. In interior decoration the flatness of the wall is to be preserved and if it is desirable to use landscape or figure compositions the treatment should be decorative and flat rather than in perspective and all construction lines paralleled rather than opposed. The flatness of the floor must not be disturbed by representations of things disagreeable to walk over, shadows and depressions, raised or angular effects as sometimes seen in oil cloths where one walks on the edges of cubes, also naturalistic flower forms in carpets and rugs are to be shunned. The more true to nature a bunch of pink roses may be the *less*, is it fit to tread upon. The greatest blunder along the line of fitness to purpose has been and is to a great extent still the attempt at direct transcripts from nature to ornament or to put pictures to a purely decorative or ornamental use. Such faults and absurdities admitted in the past have come down to us so hallowed by time and afford such marked characteristics and illustrations of the periods which produced them, that one would hesitate to have them done away with. An instance of this, one may find in Ghiberti's bronze gates in Florence, the work of the painter rather than the sculptor, the pictorial art reigning supreme, and in Landseer's treatment of lions in Trafalgar Square. In the treatment also of Milan Cathedral, pictorial rather than architectural distance scales!

A picture may not be transposed to different substances and purposes without losing the qualities which make it valuable, yet we are in danger to this day of finding ourselves carving our roast over the face of a fair lady or uncovering gradually as our soup diminishes the much abused Empress Queen Louise of Prussia who is attempting to come down stairs on her back at the bottom of the plate.

We see the soft, velvety textures of a beautiful suede pillow top desecrated with stiff, unpliable oil paints in an attempt to reproduce Rosa Bonheurs' Monarch of the Glen, of the head of a fierce Indian chief, thus *destroying* the *lure* of the pillow as a resting place for the weary head, and can we think of a piece of china so outlandish in shape that it has not been the recipient of Millet's Angelus as an addition to its charm of structure.

If design, principles, which we are learning should control all construction and decoration, were to govern wearing apparel and provide a standard therefore, our clothing would be designed to meet the requirements of the figure and individual coloring, the necessity for ease of movement and the demands of different occasions, rather than the dictates of passing whims and fancies.

Fortunately the modern art movement especially in European countries comprises the main principles of simple, rational, construction, practical ability, and artistic combinations of cheerful colors.

In our own country we have the Newcomb Pottery in which the construction lines are so closely adhered to, that the decoration, the motive of which is usually a native flower, seems to have grown and developed with the rose from the moment of its conception.

The Deerfield baskets have color schemes so satisfactorily woven, that what you buy as a basket turns out to be a harmony whose loveliness balances and enhances its utility.

It seems to me that the best word to leave with you to characterize this principle of suitability to purpose, is *restraint*; not all that can be done but all that the occasion requires.

The principles of composition then are: Orderly plan, harmony, balance, rhythm.

principality and sacrifice, plus in painting, sculpture, literature, and music, that intangible something which genius gives to it and makes it worth while; and plus in decoration and architecture, the elements of control of construction, fitness to purpose and restraint, the sum total being unity.



VIEW OF KANAYA
By HIROSHIGE

A principal mass of space holding the attention with one or two subordinate masses and the rest plain spaces.